



February 27, 2023

Re: Testimony, **Opposition** to HB6659

I am JoAnne Torti, founder and Executive Director of ASAP!, an arts-infused education organization providing in-school, after-school, and summer programs for children and families throughout northwest CT and beyond. I have had the opportunity to attend the Connecticut Arts Alliance, Connecticut Humanities, and Connecticut Tourism Coalition meetings. The Governor's budget returns state funding for arts, culture, and tourism to 2019 levels. The level of funding was inadequate then and is even less adequate now. If we go back to pre-pandemic funding levels, the state will lose its considerable investments in these sectors in the FY2022/2023 budget.

Connecticut Arts Alliance, Connecticut Humanities, and Connecticut Tourism Coalition have worked together on an Arts, Culture, and Tourism Funding Roadmap that offers legislators a guide **to meaningful, reliable, and equitable investment in these critical contributors to the state's economy and workforce.**

- The Roadmap addresses the historical underfunding by proposing an investment that is:
 - At a level that fully supports tourism and cultural organizations in making Connecticut a more attractive place to visit, work, and live.
 - Consistent over time to minimize operational disruption, improve long-term planning and sustainability, and maximize the return on the state's investment.
 - Distributed so that arts and cultural organizations -- especially those that have been historically under-resourced -- have equal access to funding opportunities, and so that Connecticut can compete with neighboring states for visitors.
 - Backed up metrics and data that demonstrate value.
 - Administered by trusted public and private partners to ensure accountability.

Cuts in arts, culture, and tourism funding proposed in HB6659 would negatively impact ASAP! and our communities. ASAP! benefited from increased funding during the pandemic and increased funding is crucial to the longevity of our organization. Children, families, teaching artists, and communities depend on ASAP! to provide quality programming and employment opportunities. Cutting funds cripples our organization from doing its essential work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'JoAnne Torti', is written over a horizontal line.

JoAnne Torti

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